



SHOSTAKOVICH

The Two Violin Sonatas & Rare Chamber Works



SASHA ROZHDESTVENSKY *violin* • **JEREMY MENUHIN** *piano*

MOOKIE LEE-MENUHIN *piano*

ILONA DOMNICH *soprano* • **ALEXANDRA SHERMAN** *mezzo-soprano*

includes first recordings on CD

SHOSTAKOVICH

The Two Violin Sonatas and Rare Chamber Works

The recording focusses on the music for violin and piano written by **Dmitri Shostakovich** (1906-1975), himself a pianist of no mean ability who chose to restrict public performances to those of his own works, and who also made recordings of his concertos and solo pieces.

It was for David Oistrakh that Shostakovich wrote his *Violin Sonata*, having earlier written two concertos for the soloist. The second of these emerged in 1967 as an intended sixtieth birthday present for Oistrakh, but the composer misjudged the date by a full year and thus undertook the present work to make good the error. Composed between 26 August and 23 October 1968, the *Sonata* was given a private hearing by Oistrakh with the composer (and Shostakovich confidante) Mieczysław Weinberg as pianist on 8 January 1969; the public premiere following in Moscow – by Oistrakh and Svyatoslav Richter – on 3 May. Long considered one of Shostakovich's most forbidding works, recent years have none the less confirmed its personal usage of serial thinking within a powerfully classical framework.

The *Andante* opens with a pensive theme for piano, against which the violin enters in similarly musing manner. Tension increases at length until a more capricious idea takes hold of both instruments, its dance-like strain continuing into an altered reprise of the initial theme with some notably

spectral writing for violin in its upper register. A fragmented reappearance of the second theme ushers in an equivocal close. The *Allegretto* is a moderately paced though tensile scherzo whose declamatory main theme is complemented by the sardonic idea heard soon afterwards. Elements of both are freely exchanged over the heated dialogue that ensues, in the course of which the music makes its way back to the initial gesture for a tempestuous ending. The *Largo* unfolds as a set of variations on the rhetorical theme at the outset. These variations explore various technical and expressive facets, on the way to the climax with its explosive cadenzas for piano then violin, and heightened reiteration of the underlying theme. Aspects from the opening reappear as the work reaches its resigned and desolate conclusion.

It was quite recently that evidence came to light of a violin sonata that Shostakovich had begun during the summer of 1945, only to abandon the piece forthwith. What remains is a torso of 225 bars and comprises a double exposition, followed by an 8-bar fragment which marks the start of the development. The manuscript was edited for publication (in the Collected Edition of Shostakovich's works) by Manashir Yakubov, who also showed it to the composer Alfred Schnittke in the hope he might undertake a completion. The latter, however, declined to do so on the basis that the lengthy and tonally wide-ranging nature of the double exposition would



Dmitri Shostakovich, Mozhayskoye Shosse, Moscow, March 1, 1949,
taken by Victor Dombrovskiy © Olga Dobrovskaya

require an equally extensive development, pushing this first movement alone to considerable proportions and hence a reason why Shostakovich abandoned this work in the first instance.

Not that the composer wasted the existing material: one of the most fascinating aspects is its relationship to the symphonies of this period - both to the initial plan for a 'Ninth Symphony' from the beginning of 1945 which was similarly curtailed at the end of the first movement's exposition [recorded on Naxos

8.572138], and to the exposition from the first movement of the *Tenth Symphony* eight years later. It was first performed in Espinho on 8th July 2006 by Sasha Rozhdestvensky with pianist Mikhail Rudy, and this is its first commercial recording.

The torso begins almost casually on violin, rapidly combining with piano for a wistful dance-like theme which finds deft contrast in a livelier theme that follows (and which later became the second subject in the first movement of the *Tenth Symphony*). The initial theme resumes,

1

I

Moderato con moto 1

Violino *simlice*

Piano *legato*

2

3

4

Opening page of the *Unfinished Sonata*, a facsimile of the fair author's manuscript © DSCH Edition

alternating with its successor in the eventful 'second exposition' which duly comes to a halt around the point that a development might have been expected. There have been at least two attempts at a conclusion, the present one having been written by Gennady Rozhdestvensky.¹

While almost all of Shostakovich's 15 string quartets have been arranged for larger forces, most often for chamber or string orchestras, few have been transcribed for fewer than four instruments. This

makes the present version of the *Andantino* from the *Fourth Quartet* more significant: Shostakovich wrote the work between April and December 1949, with several private hearings preceding the public premiere by the Beethoven Quartet on 3rd December 1953. Leader of the quartet during this period was Dmitri Tsyganov, who went on to make this arrangement of its second movement. The choice was an astute one, as this is the lightest in texture – if by no means in expression – of Shostakovich's quartets from the post-war era, its interplay of melody and accompaniment given added definition in violin-and-piano guise.

Over a halting piano accompaniment, the violin unfolds

¹ 21 bars of a following development section, followed by 7 bars of the main subject, which appear in Shostakovich's original rough manuscript and remain unpublished, are performed in this recording. This development section begins on the very last bar of the published score (CD time 04:12) and is followed by an 11 bar coda written by Gennady Rozhdestvensky (CD time 04:48).







an eloquent melody whose rhythmic flexibility is never to the detriment of its expressive poise. This builds as in a gradual arc of intensity to its climax, after which the piano has a pensive transition into a calmer resumption of the theme which continues as at the beginning, now more subdued and inward on its way to a series of cadential phrases whose conclusiveness is imbued with a sense of transience and regret (qualities which are arguably even more pronounced here than in the quartet original).

Shostakovich and **Igor Stravinsky** (1882-1971) were remote from each other as individuals, with the former's admiration for the latter expressly on the basis of certain compositions (and as such was not reciprocated). One of these was *Symphony of Psalms*, of which Shostakovich spoke with admiration on several occasions, having made a four-hand piano transcription soon after the work's première and publication in 1930. It received no public hearing, the autograph being found among Shostakovich's papers after his death, though the latter did present a copy of it to Stravinsky on his return visit to the USSR in 1962.

The first part preserves much of the starkness and monumentality of the original, the choral part shared between pianists so the thematic and harmonic continuity is in no way impaired. The second movement is no less mindful of the original's plangent sparseness, as its fugato texture evolves with limpid sureness to the first of its climaxes then an airy treatment of

the yearning instrumental interlude, before the main climax with its implacable chordal writing. The third movement begins with due circumspection and then heads impulsively to the first faster episode, with its dextrous exchanges between the hands. The second of these episodes reaches a forceful apex, making way for the beatific final section with its supplicatory mood and ensuing paean – its transcendence tellingly conveyed prior to the closing benediction. Among Shostakovich's various unrealized plans for opera, none is more intriguing than that of Chekhov's 1894 short story *The Black Monk*. Although this advanced no further than brief sketches, the composer did manage a transcription of the song *La Serenata* by **Gaetano Braga** (1829-1907) which features in the story and which would no doubt have played a notable role in the opera. This setting of the Italian text by Marco Marcelliano Marcelllo (1820-1865) in a Russian translation by A. Gorchakova, adapted by Shostakovich, was completed on 25 September 1972 (Shostakovich's 66th birthday) and unheard for over a decade. Its scoring for soprano and mezzo singers, violin and piano preserves this song's essentially nostalgic essence but gives little indication as to the content of the opera such as Shostakovich might have conceived it.

Over undulating piano the violin unfolds a melody, which is then taken up by the two singers in close harmony. An agitated central episode is allotted mainly to mezzo, after which all four musicians reunite in a heightened resumption of the song and then a bittersweet leave-taking.

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La Serenata – A Walachian Legend (text: M. M. Marcello (1820-1865). Russian translation: A. Gorchakova)

— Ах, что за звуки слышу я.
Сердце они пленяют
И на крыльях зефира к нам сюда
Как бы с небес долетают.

Выдь на балкон, прошу тебя!
Скажи, откуда звуки те идут?
— Здесь никого не вижу я,
Спи, друг мой, Бог с тобою!

Шепчут промеж себя листы,
Озарённые луною,
Верь, этот звук — обман воображенья,
Ты так больна, мудрено ль?

— Нет! Нет!
Нет, то [та] гармония священная,
Нам, смертным, нам, смертным, непонятна,
И в небеса, в небеса блаженные
Летит опять [она] обратно,
Её постигла я душой!

Покойной ночи, мама,
Меня тот звук манит с собой.

Гармония нам, смертным, непонятна
И в небеса, в небеса блаженные
Летит опять обратно.
Её постигла я душой!

покойной ночи, мама,
Меня тот звук манит с собой,
Меня тот звук манит с собой,
вук тот манит меня с собой!

*What are those sounds I seem to hear
Rushing down from heaven above
They charm me so and hasten here
As on the wings of a dove.*

*Come out here, please, I beg of you!
Tell me whence come those delightful sounds?
Sleep, my friend, God be with you,
There's not, I say, a soul around!*

*Leaves whispering amongst themselves,
Illuminated by the moon,
Your imagination does delve,
And so contrive to make you swoon.*

*No! No!
No, that harmony so sacred then,
Is beyond the ken of mortal men,
And now has flown away again,
Back to the blessed heavens,
I can feel it in my soul!*

*Goodnight, Mother,
That sound it does entice me.*

*That harmony's beyond our ken
And now has flown away again
Back to the blessed heavens.
I can feel it in my soul!*

*Goodnight, Mother
That sound it does entice me,
That sound it does entice me,
That sound it must entice me!*



Sasha Rozhdestvensky was described by Yehudi Menuhin as ‘one of the most talented and refined violinists of his generation’.

He studied at the Moscow Conservatory, the Paris Conservatory and at the Royal College of Music, London. Since his debut at Carnegie Hall, New York in 1992, Sasha has performed regularly as a soloist with the leading orchestras of the world including the Boston Symphony, London Symphony Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, l’Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio-France and the Mariinsky Orchestra.

Sasha has made several recordings for record labels such as Delos, Chandos, Nimbus and Praga Digitals, which have received great critical acclaim. He plays several violins, among which are a Guarneri del Gesù and a Stradivarius loaned to him by the Stradivarius Society, of which he recently became an ambassador.

www.sashar.net

Photo taken by Mina Angela Ighnatova

Jeremy Menuhin is widely regarded for his artistry and the integrity of his interpretations: ‘unfailingly lyrical, exemplary, exquisitely polished, yet directly expressive’ (*The New York Times*).

Jeremy has collaborated with some of the world’s foremost orchestras, such as the Berlin Philharmonic, the Berlin Radio Symphony, the Vienna Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic and the English Chamber, among others.

He made his New York debut as winner of the Young Concert Artists Competition in 1984, and since then has collaborated with renowned artists such as Yehudi Menuhin, Joshua Bell, Mstislav Rostropovich, Steven Isserlis, Gérard Caussé, Bruno Giuranna and with many quartets of international reputation.

Jeremy has recorded works by Schubert, Mozart, Debussy, Beethoven, Dvořák and Bartók for Chandos, EMI, and Nimbus. His recording of Bartók’s *Sonatas for Violin and Piano* with his father, Yehudi Menuhin, was awarded the prestigious ‘Grand Prix du Disque’. His Schubert recordings for Dinemec Classics have been widely acclaimed. To quote *The Times*: ‘Every harmonic side-step, every momentary change of pace is tasted to the full.’

www.jeremymenuhin.com

Photo taken by Nikolaj Lund



Born in Seoul, South Korea, **Mookie Lee-Menuhin** has performed throughout mainland Europe, in Scandinavia, Britain and Asia both as a soloist and chamber musician. She has performed at many of the major concert halls in Europe and Asia, including Victoria Hall, Geneva, the Tonhalle, Zurich, the Bern Casino, the Kraków Philharmonic Hall, the Smetana Hall in Pilsen, Czech Republic, the Musikhuset in Aarhus and Sejong Hall in Seoul, South Korea.

In 2002 Mookie Lee-Menuhin won the YAMAHA competition and in 2003 she received the prestigious Danish Augustinus Award as well as winning the Prince Joachim and Princess Alexandra of Denmark International Prize.

Mookie has made many appearances on radio and television including the BBC, DR, DK4, Radio Swiss Classic, and has performed at festivals such as the Pablo Casals Festival in Prades, Menuhin Festival Gstaad, Schloss Elmau, Festival de Bellerive, Internationale Musikfestwoche auf Schloss Berleburg, West Cork Chamber Music, Boğaziçi University Foundation, Smetana Festival, Felix Mendelssohn Music Days, Grandes Heures de Saint-Emilion, Musikalischer Sommer In Ostfriesland, and the Seoul Spring Festival. Mookie Lee-Menuhin is also an active chamber musician, and has played with, among others, Alberto Lysy, Gary Hoffmann, and her husband Jeremy Menuhin.

In 2015, the Menuhin Duo made a recording for Genuin Records of works by Schubert, including Jeremy Menuhin's



Photo taken by Nikolaj Lund



Photo taken by Asimina Giagoudaki

Ilona Domnich is a rising opera star described by critics as possessing a memorable voice of silken beauty with a luminous edge to the tone, and as a sensitive musician and actress of magnetic presence. In 2014, she was chosen by *Opera Now* magazine as one of The Top 10 high flyers, ‘new generation of sopranos who are destined to have impressive careers’ and was also the Artist of the Month in the March 2015 issue.

Born in St Petersburg, Russia, Ilona moved to Israel and studied music in Jerusalem. Originally a pianist, she was later discovered by a famous opera teacher who invited her to study at the Royal College of Music, London. She has since performed in many

famous UK venues and festivals, including English National Opera, Buxton Opera, Grange Park Opera and the Aldeburgh Festival, as well as throughout Europe. She has sung title roles in operas such as *The Barber of Seville*, *Rigoletto*, *Eugene Onegin*, *The Magic Flute*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *La bohème*, and *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

Her recent recording with the Southbank Sinfonia, ‘Surrender, Voices of Persephone’, was released on Signum Classics in 2015.

www.ilonadomnich.com

Born in St Petersburg, Russia, **Alexandra Sherman** studied piano in Jerusalem and singing at the University of Melbourne and the Royal College of Music, London, and is the winner of many competitions including the Joan Sutherland and ABC Young Performer of the Year Awards.

Alexandra has given recitals at the Wigmore Hall, the BBC Proms and the St Petersburg White Nights Festival. Concert and oratorio repertoire includes Bach, Handel, Pergolesi, Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Mahler and Verdi with conductors such as Christopher Hogwood, Alexander Shelley, Gianandrea Noseda and Gustav Kuhn and orchestras including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and The Academy of Ancient Music.

She has sung roles in operas including *La Donna del Lago*,



Photo: PicturePeople, Fotostudios, Germany

Alcina, Flavio, Orlando, Eugene Onegin, Queen of Spades and Rusalka, at Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, Opera North and Opera Australia.

Her discography includes Handel's *Messiah* (ABC Classics) and Offenbach's *Entre Nous* (Opera Rara).

www.alexandrasherman-mezzo.com

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Photos:

Cover, Dmitri Shostakovich in The Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, January 1972, taken by © Oleg Makarov, with the kind permission of Irina Antonovna Shostakovich

Pages 4-5, Dmitri Shostakovich, Ivanovo, Russia, July 1943, (Nina Vassilyevna Shostakovich, © www.chostakovitch.org)

CD tray, Dmitri Shostakovich, Ivanova, Russia, 1943 (Nina Vassilyevna Shostakovich, © Irina Antonovna Shostakovich)

Session photos, pages 6-9, taken by Andrew Walton

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La Serenata Russian and English text (Original Italian text by Marco Marcelliano Marcello, 1820-1865) © DSCH Edition



Also available from Sasha Rozhdestvensky on FHR

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Nelson Gómez *guitarrón*

with

Igor Fedorov *clarinet*

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 134 (1968) 32:36

- 1 I. Andante 10:48
- 2 II. Allegretto 6:36
- 3 III Largo – Andante 15:12

4 **Unfinished Sonata for Violin and Piano (1945) 5:03**

5 **Andantino from String Quartet No. 4 6:50**

(arr. violin & piano by
Dmitri Tsyganov, early-mid 1960s)

Sasha Rozhdestvensky *violin* •

Jeremy Menuhin *piano*

Mookie Lee-Menuhin *piano* *

(Jeremy Menuhin *primo*, Mookie Lee-Menuhin *secondo*) *

Ilona Domnich *soprano* †

Alexandra Sherman *mezzo-soprano* †

Igor STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)

Symphony of Psalms * **19:15**

(arr. piano duet by

Dmitri Shostakovich, c.1930)

- 6 Part I 3:04
- 7 Part II 6:07
- 8 Part III 10:04

Gaetano BRAGA (1829-1907)

9 **La Serenata – A Walachian Legend** † **5:08**

(Andante con moto)

(transcr. soprano, mezzo-soprano, violin &
piano by Dmitri Shostakovich, 1972)

Total Time: 69:46

Recorded at Menuhin Hall, Yehudi Menuhin School, Cobham, Surrey, UK,

8-9 January (1-5), 10 January (6-8) & 11 January 2015 (9)

Recorded by K&A Productions Ltd. (producer: Andrew Walton • engineer: Debs Spanton)

24bit, 96kHz hi-resolution recording and mastering

Artwork by David Murphy (FHR)



First commercial recording of the Unfinished Sonata for Violin and Piano

First recordings on CD apart from tracks 1-3